

How to Learn about Medicare Changes



Senior Health Insurance
Information Program

Ask SHIIP

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Q: I keep hearing about all the changes to Medicare. What is the best way to learn what I need to know?

A: The Medicare Modernization Act of 2003 contains many changes to Medicare including: prescription drug plans, new ways to receive your Medicare benefits through private Preferred Provider Organizations, and new preventive services. How to keep up and figure out what really matters to you is an excellent question.

There are many sources of information on the coming changes. Please be careful to verify that the source you use is reliable and accurate. Here are a few we recommend:

1. **Medicare:** At some point during 2005, you will most likely receive **mail** regarding upcoming changes to Medicare. Read any letters thoroughly and if you do not understand, call Medicare or SHIIP and ask for clarification.

Do not be embarrassed to ask for assistance. These are complicated changes.

Medicare offers a 24-hour a day, seven days a week hot line: **1-800-Medicare** (1-800-633-4227). Operators can answer your questions, order publications, or give referrals to local assistance programs (such as SHIIP).

Medicare offers free **publications** on many topics, including the upcoming changes. Call 1-800-Medicare or visit www.medicare.gov to order.

If you are on the Internet, Medicare offers a great website: www.medicare.gov. This web site offers search tools (data bases) that can help you make decisions.

2. **SHIIP:** SHIIP is a nation wide program made up of **volunteers** that provide free, confidential, unbiased, and up-to-date information and referral for people with Medicare and their families.

SHIIP volunteers can meet with you in person in your community and help you sort through the decision making process. Most volunteers themselves have Medicare or work in a related field and understand the challenges you face. SHIIP staff and volunteers also do frequent **presentations** all over the state on Medicare issues. We also publish **educational**

materials such as this column. Call 1-800-452-4800 or visit www.in.gov/idoi/shiip to learn more.

Most of our volunteers come to SHIIP because they want to learn more about Medicare and they like the idea of helping others. Does this sound appealing to you? SHIIP is currently seeking volunteers all across Indiana.

To request assistance from a current SHIIP volunteer counselor or to learn more about becoming a volunteer yourself, call 1-800-452-4800.

3. **Other sources:** You can look to other agencies that work with seniors and the disabled such as your Area Agency on Aging or local senior center for information. Reading the newspaper and watching TV can also alert you to important issues. Many groups also have helpful web sites such as www.kff.org and www.aarp.org.

It is very important that you consider the upcoming changes to decide if any will benefit you. Please do not ignore doing so because you feel overwhelmed. Help is available through Medicare, SHIIP, and other organizations.

Address your questions to:

Ask SHIIP
311 W. Washington Street
Ste. 300
Indianapolis, IN 46204
Or www.in.gov/idoi/shiip
1-800-452-4800

SHIIP is a free, unbiased counseling program provided by the Indiana State Department of Insurance. For assistance, call your local SHIIP site to make an appointment or call the state office at 1-800-452-4800 to obtain a list of local SHIIP sites.